

# MEMO

## Police Department

**DATE:** 01/14/2014

**TO:** FRANK HAUPTMANN, CPRC MANAGER

**FROM:** Sergio G. Diaz, Chief of Police

**RE:** CPRC DOMESTIC VIOLENCE POLICY RECOMMENDATIONS

---

My staff and I have carefully reviewed and considered the recommendations put forth by the CPRC regarding responsibilities of the Communications Bureau in domestic violence incidents.

I appreciate that the CPRC understands the fact that domestic violence incidents are inherently dangerous and subject to numerous tactical concerns. I don't believe, however, that the mandatory policy language recommended by the CPRC would be conducive to the safety of our officers, or the safety of persons involved in the incidents.

### RECOMMENDATION 1

#### **E. PROCEDURES:**

##### **1. Public Safety Dispatcher's Responsibilities:**

- a. The dispatcher who receives a domestic violence call ~~can~~ **shall** provide the responding officers with vital information that could save the victim's and the officer's life. The dispatcher will, ~~whenever possible,~~ dispatch at least two officers **and one field supervisor** to every incident.

With regard to changing "can" to "shall," Dispatchers are aware of the need to convey all pertinent information regarding such a priority call to officers, and are trained to do so whenever such information is available. There are two issues, however: First, such information isn't always available due to either limitations of the reporting party's personal knowledge or the reporting party's inability to convey such information under the stress of the incident. Second, officers frequently arrive before such information can be ascertained by the dispatcher and conveyed to the officers. Recognizing that domestic violence incidents are of high priority, the Public Safety Dispatcher's primary motivation is to get sufficient information to enter a call and get officers en-route to the location. Dispatchers then ask additional pertinent questions and relay the information to officers as it becomes available. Changing this section to "shall" imposes a duty on Dispatchers to convey information that may not be available, and imposes an expectation that they garner all information prior to dispatching the call, when the expectation in most circumstances is that they dispatch officers to the location without delay.

In fact, in this particular case, the call was received at 1614 Hrs, entered into Computer Aided Dispatch (CAD) at 1616 Hrs, and the first officer arrived at 1617 Hrs. This level of efficiency and rapid response would be sacrificed by imposing a unilateral duty to obtain and convey all pertinent details prior to dispatching field personnel.

With regard to mandating the dispatch of two officers and a field supervisor to every domestic violence call, there are similar concerns regarding creating an undue delay in police response. I am concerned that such language creates an expectation that domestic violence calls should be held until such time as two officers and a supervisor are simultaneously available. Such is often not the case. Here, the police department engages in a balancing of interests between officer safety and safety of the public. This is why dispatchers are trained to dispatch two officers whenever possible, understanding that when call volume is high or multiple incidents are ongoing, and personnel resources are stretched thin, it may not always be possible to initially dispatch two units to a domestic violence incident. This does not justify holding such a call, however, and the dispatcher should be afforded the discretion to send any available officer to the call based on the totality of circumstances.

Likewise, the number of calls which are related to domestic violence, coupled with the relatively few number of field supervisors and the other expectations placed upon them, make it impractical to expect supervisors to respond to all domestic violence incidents. Dispatchers are trained to at least notify, if not dispatch a field supervisor whenever circumstances dictate a potential need for field supervision. Supervisors are trained to be alert and attentive to the calls dispatched and to respond to incidents where they believe supervisory presence may be helpful. Officers are trained to call for a supervisor whenever there is a need for one at an incident, or whenever an arrest is made. As a result, field supervisors respond to numerous domestic violence incidents. The requested language would likely do little (if anything) to change the outcome of those incidents, but could greatly sacrifice response times to incidents where rapid response is often critical.

## RECOMMENDATION 2

### **E. PROCEDURES:**

#### **1. Public Safety Dispatcher's Responsibilities:**

f. In addition to information normally gathered, an effort ~~should~~ **shall** be made to determine and relay the following to the responding officers:

**(2) Whether weapons are involved; if the suspect is currently of has recently physically assaulted the victim, if the victim is injured, and / or in need of medical attention;**

**(6) Complaint history at that location, including a brief description of the offender's criminal history.**

As with the concerns noted above, there is a legitimate concern regarding the need to dispatch officers to an ongoing incident as rapidly as possible and the desire to supply officers with every possible detail which may prove pertinent to that incident.

Dispatchers balance these competing interests every time they send officers into harm's way on behalf of our citizens.

With any priority call, Dispatchers make an effort to supply officers with all relevant information as time and resources permit. As noted above, however, the time between receipt of this call and officers' arrival on scene was three minutes. One must recognize the time it takes even the most skilled dispatch team to get information from the reporting party, for the call-taker to input that information into CAD, and run appropriate criminal records and premise histories, and for the Primary Channel dispatcher to read and relay that information to officers who are responding in the field. Section 6 (referenced here) has 6 separate lines of inquiry "in addition to information normally gathered". These areas are explored by the dispatcher as time and circumstances permit. In a perfect world, all relevant information would be ascertained and conveyed. We recognize that this isn't always the case; especially when dealing with an excited reporting party and striving for rapid response times. This is why the language states that the dispatcher *SHOULD* make an effort to ascertain and dispatch this additional information. It is not always possible.

With regard to Subsection 2, injuries (to any party), need for medical aid, and past history of violence are always asked about with regard to domestic violence. This is part of the "information normally gathered", which is referred to in Subparagraph f.

With regard to Subsection 6, Dispatchers routinely inquire about and run suspects for wants/ warrants and local criminal history. This is a routine practice under "information normally gathered", which is performed whenever sufficient information is available from the reporting party. Unfortunately, it is not always possible due to time constraints or inability of the reporting party to furnish sufficient information about the suspect's identity. This information is provided to the responding officers whenever possible.

## CONCLUSION

The current policy of the Riverside Police Department with regard to responsibilities of the Communications Bureau in domestic violence incidents is predicated on a standard of reasonableness. We have established guidelines in accordance with predominant modern Law Enforcement training, which direct their conduct on such incidents as safety and circumstances permit. We are aware of the competing interests of providing officers with necessary information, dispatching sufficient personnel for officer safety, and coordinating the fastest response possible when our citizens are in jeopardy. The fluidity required under such circumstances calls for certain flexibility under a reasonableness standard. As such, we are hesitant to establish unilateral mandates which would undermine such flexibility at the cost of rapid responses to inherently dangerous situations which are often rapidly evolving.

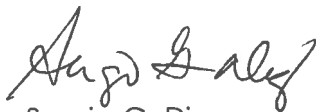
The police department is also currently in the process of migrating from our current policy and procedures manual to a state-standardized policy manual called Lexipol. One of the goals of the Lexipol project is to bifurcate policy and procedure. As a result, such procedural directives as discussed here in your recommendations will no

longer be part of the policy, but will be part of the Standard Operating Procedures (SOP) for the Communications Bureau. Those SOP procedures are currently, and are expected to remain, in accordance with the current policy as discussed here.

I understand that some of the terms and concepts discussed here are difficult to convey in written words. The Police Department has a "sit-along" program, which is akin to a ride-along, but consists of four hours spent sitting with dispatchers and listening along as they handle incoming 911 calls or dispatch officers and firefighters to in-progress incidents. We require this of new officers because we understand that many, even with prior law-enforcement experience, have never experienced critical incidents from a dispatcher's perspective or seen first-hand what emergency communications entails. We believe this experience provides a more well-rounded understanding of emergency dispatch.

Accordingly, I would like to extend that opportunity to any of the Commissioners who would be interested in participating in a sit-along in our Communications Bureau.

Thank you for your concern and procedural recommendations. Please be assured that our Communications Bureau consistently does everything within its power to develop and relay all possible information to field personnel, to ensure officers arrive at priority calls as fast as circumstances permit, and to assist in the safest possible resolution of those incidents.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Sergio G. Diaz".

Sergio G. Diaz  
Chief of Police

SD/cp